

APPENDIX A

Impact Level Definitions

Impact Definitions—Land Use (see Section 3.2.2)

There would be a **High Impact** when project activities result in:

- Displacement of several residences.
- Substantial permanent reduction in timber land base (>0.5% of county's timber land base).
- Permanent interference with recreational activities.
- Frequent interference with traffic during project operations and maintenance.
- Impacts cannot be mitigated.

There would be a **Moderate Impact** when project activities result in:

- Frequent interference with residential or recreational use during construction and intermittently during operation and maintenance.
- Moderate reduction in timber land base (0.1 to 0.5% of county's timber land base).
- Frequent interference with traffic, generally due to slowing or delays, during construction.
- Impacts may be partially mitigated.

There would be a **Low Impact** when project activities result in:

- Nuisance impacts on residential or recreational use, such as noise and dust associated with construction and operation/maintenance (no direct interference).
- Small reduction in timber land base (<0.1% of county's timber land base).
- Infrequent and temporary interference with traffic during construction, operation, and maintenance.
- Impacts may be mostly mitigated.

There would be **No Impact** when land use is unaffected.

Impact Definitions—Geology and Soils (see Section 3.3.2)

There would be a **High Impact** when:

- Widespread clearing, grading, excavation, and compaction of soils leads to long-term accelerated erosion and increases in stormwater runoff.
- Erosion occurs through landslides or sloughing of large volumes of material, and slopes become severely eroded with multiple gullies carrying sediments into streams and/or wetlands.
- Impacts on soils cannot be mitigated.

There would be a **Moderate Impact** when:

- Limited grading, clearing, excavation, and compaction of soils leads to temporary increases in stormwater runoff.
- Erosion is limited to erosion via shallow channels at a few sites, but most sediment is intercepted before reaching streams and wetlands.
- Impacts can be partially mitigated.

There would be a **Low Impact** when:

- Clearing, grading, excavation, and compaction of soils are minimal and lead to little or no stormwater runoff.
- Erosion of slopes is limited to minor *sheet erosion* and occasional small channels; erosion and sedimentation levels would remain near present levels during and following construction.
- Impacts can be substantially mitigated.

There would be **No Impact** when there is no clearing, compaction, or other disturbance of soils.

Impact Definitions—Vegetation (see Section 3.4.2)

There would be a **High Impact** when:

- Clearing and grading permanently remove large stands of mature or maturing native forest.
- One or more Class A or Class B noxious weeds are introduced from outside of the area and become established as a result of the project.
- One or more populations of Federal species of concern within the project area or state-listed or sensitive species on state-owned lands within the project area suffer losses that put at risk the viability of the species.
- Impacts cannot be mitigated.

There would be a **Moderate Impact** when:

- Native, maturing but not old-growth, forested plant communities are permanently removed.
- One or more Class C noxious weeds are introduced from outside of the area and become established as a result of the project.
- One or more populations of Federal species of concern within the project area or state-listed or sensitive species on state-owned lands within the project area suffer damage that do not affect the viability of the species but may put local populations at risk.
- Impacts can be partially mitigated.

There would be a **Low Impact** when:

- Vegetation is temporarily damaged or cleared but rapid recovery to pre-disturbance conditions is likely.
- Some Class C noxious weeds already established in the vicinity may colonize disturbed sites but would not change the character of the pre-disturbance plant community.
- Any rare plant habitat in the project area is minimally damaged but would recover quickly, and no rare plant individuals are harmed.
- Impacts can be substantially mitigated.

There would be **No Impact** when vegetation would remain undisturbed, and no weeds would be spread or introduced.

Impact Definitions—Fish and Wildlife (see Section 3.5.2)

There would be a **High Impact** when:

- Project activities cause long-term declines in the quality or quantity of existing fish or wildlife habitat within or near the ROW.
- Fish or wildlife mortality or injury contributes to the need for Federal listing of a species.
- Project activities cause long-term or continued intermittent destruction of local populations of prey species.
- ESA-listed species are killed, injured, or permanently disturbed.
- Impacts on fish or wildlife species cannot be mitigated.

There would be a **Moderate Impact** when:

- Project activities cause short-term declines in the quality or quantity of existing fish or wildlife habitat within or near the ROW.
- Fish or animal mortality or injury occurs without causing a risk of endangering the population or contributing to the need for Federal listing.
- Project activities cause short-term destruction of local populations of prey species.
- An ESA-listed species is indirectly and temporarily disturbed.
- Impacts on fish or wildlife species can be partially mitigated.

There would be a **Low Impact** when:

- Project activities cause short-term degradation in the quality or quantity of existing fish or wildlife habitat located within or near the ROW.
- Fish or animals suffer temporary disturbance not resulting in injury or death.
- Project activities indirectly cause short-term reduction of local populations of prey species.
- No ESA-listed species is disturbed.
- Impacts on fish or wildlife species can be mostly mitigated.

There would be **No Impact** when there is no degradation of existing habitat, disturbance, injury, or death of any species of fish or wildlife.

Impact Definitions—Water Quality (see Section 3.6.2)

There would be a **High Impact** when:

- A water body that supports fish, wildlife habitat, or human uses would be extensively altered, in and beyond the project area, so as to affect its uses or integrity.
- State or Federal *chronic* ambient water quality criteria (*AWQC*) probably would be exceeded for weeks or longer in a large portion of the water body.
- Mitigation could not reduce any impacts.

There would be a **Moderate Impact** when:

- A water body that supports fish, wildlife habitat, or human uses would be altered only locally (within the project area) so as to affect its uses or integrity.
- There is a possible short-term alteration of water quality, such as exceeding Federal or state AWQC, that is confined to the local project area.

- Impacts could be partially mitigated.

There would be a **Low Impact** when:

- A water body that supports fish, wildlife habitat, or human uses would be slightly altered only locally (part of the project area) so as to affect its uses or integrity.
- Normal background water quality parameters would be altered without exceeding Federal or state AWQC.
- Impacts could be mostly mitigated.

There would be **No Impact** when surface water and groundwater are unaffected by construction activities or operation and maintenance of the transmission line.

Impact Definitions—Wetlands (see Section 3.7.2)

There would be a **High Impact** when:

- Disturbance of wetland hydrology, wetland vegetation, or wetland soils is extensive.
- Wetland functions are permanently lost or impaired beyond recovery.
- Waterways are permanently rerouted or severely degraded due to the placement of fill in stream channels.
- Mitigation cannot compensate for impacts.

There would be a **Moderate Impact** when:

- Disturbance of wetland hydrology, vegetation, or soils is slight (small portions of wetlands are permanently filled) or temporary (as from temporary road fill).
- Wetland functions would be modestly impaired.
- Waterways are partially filled due to the installation or replacement of culverts or fords, or due to road widening, resulting in a temporary loss of functions or habitat.
- Recovery of vegetation and wetland functions requires restoration and monitoring, but is achieved largely within several years after seeding and planting; or impacts are mitigated by off-site mitigation.

There would be a **Low Impact** when:

- Disturbance of wetlands is temporary and affects only small patches of wetland vegetation that may be crushed or cut and small areas of wetland soils that may be compacted.
- Wetland functions are temporarily and slightly impaired.
- Waterway function or habitat is temporarily degraded from adjacent activities but no fill material is placed in stream channels.
- Recovery from impacts occurs naturally, without the need for restoration activities; impacts can be mitigated except for brief loss or impairment of some wetland functions.

There would be **No Impact** when wetlands or directly adjacent uplands are not altered or disturbed, although transmission lines may span or run adjacent to wetlands.

Impact Definitions—Floodplains (see Section 3.8.2)

There would be a **High Impact** when:

- Activities within floodplains result in long-term alteration of floodplain functions, such as significantly decreasing flood-storage capacity over a large area in the floodplain or altering the course of flood waters.
- Activities adjacent to floodplains result in deposition of a large amount of sediment into the floodplain, significantly decreasing flood storage.
- Activities within floodplains result in a significant loss of natural resources, such as long-term or permanent removal of a large area of riparian vegetation or destruction of wildlife habitat or off-channel habitat for salmonids.
- Impacts on floodplains cannot be mitigated.

There would be a **Moderate Impact** when:

- Activities within floodplains result in long-term alteration of floodplain functions but only minimally decrease flood-storage capacity within the floodplain and do not alter the course of floodwaters.
- Activities adjacent to floodplains result in the deposition of a small amount of sediment into the floodplain, only minimally decreasing flood storage.
- Activities within floodplains result in minimal loss of natural resources within the floodplain, such as short-term losses or long-term or permanent removal of only a small area of riparian vegetation, with little destruction of wildlife habitat or off-channel habitat for salmonids.
- Impacts can be partially mitigated.

There would be a **Low Impact** when:

- Activities within floodplains result in short-term, localized alteration of floodplain functions but only minimally or temporarily decrease flood-storage capacity and do not alter the course of floodwaters.
- Activities within floodplains result in minimal loss of natural resources, such as short-term loss of only small areas of riparian vegetation, with little or no destruction of wildlife habitat or off-channel habitat for salmonids.
- Activities adjacent to floodplains result in deposition of incidental amounts of sediment into the floodplain, not decreasing flood storage.
- Impacts can be mostly mitigated.

There would be **No Impact** when project activities would not take place in or near floodplains, or floodplains are spanned by transmission lines but not otherwise affected.

Impact Definitions—Visual (see Section 3.9.2)

There would be a **High Impact** when:

- A large number of additional people (compared to existing conditions), highly sensitive to their surroundings, would see the transmission line in the foreground and middle ground on a permanent basis, and the line would dominate views.
- Scarring and/or erosion from new or improved access roads or clearing would be evident

and potentially severe and/or extensive over a long time period.

- Views of an officially recognized scenic or recreational resource would be adversely affected for a large number of people on a permanent basis.
- Impacts cannot be mitigated.

There would be a **Moderate Impact** when:

- The line would be visible to large numbers of additional people but it would not be a dominant element in the landscape because views would be partially screened, large segments of the line would be visible but only for a short time, and/or most views would be in the middle or background.
- Scarring and/or erosion from access roads or clearing would be evident and not severe or extensive over a long time period.
- The line would conflict with prevailing land patterns but be visible to few people or for short periods.
- Impacts may be partially mitigated.

There would be a **Low Impact** when:

- Few additional viewers would see the line because it would be isolated, screened, or seen at a distance; existing conditions (transmission lines) have already established impacts.
- Access road scars and clearing would not substantially detract from the setting.
- Views would be short-lived and no visually sensitive resource would be affected.
- Impacts may be mostly mitigated.
- There would be **No Impact** when the existing visual setting would not change or the project would result in improved visual impacts because the proposed pole structures would be more aesthetically appealing than the existing structures.

Impact Definitions—Air Quality (see Section 3.10.2)

There would be a **High Impact** when project activities result in:

- A widespread reduction in air quality that could pose a probable risk to human health and safety, and would violate an established air quality standard.
- Impacts cannot be mitigated.

There would be a **Moderate Impact** when project activities result in:

- A localized reduction in air quality on a temporary basis that could create a possible but unlikely risk to human health and safety, and would not violate an air quality standard.
- Impacts may be partially mitigated.

There would be a **Low Impact** when project activities result in:

- Minor increases in emissions of pollutants would occur on a temporary basis, air quality would not be perceptibly affected, effects would be confined to the immediate vicinity of the project, and health and safety risks would be unlikely.
- Impacts may be mostly mitigated.

There would be **No Impact** when no increases in emissions of pollutants would occur during construction or operation/maintenance.

Impact Definitions—Socioeconomics (see Section 3.11.2)

A **High Impact** would result from one or more of the following conditions:

- Regional reduction of the quality or quantity of social or economic resources.
- Significant reduction of long-term economic productivity.
- Consumption of significant amounts of non-renewable resources.
- Disproportionately high impacts on low-income or minority populations.
- Impacts could not be mitigated.

A **Moderate Impact** would result from one or more of the following conditions:

- Local reduction of the quality or quantity of social or economic resources.
- Marginal reduction of long-term economic productivity.
- Consumption of moderate amounts of non-renewable resources.
- Potential impacts on minority or low-income populations would be moderate or less or would not be disproportionate.
- Impacts would be mostly mitigated.

A **Low Impact** would result from one or more of the following conditions:

- Reduction of the quality or quantity of social or economic resources within the site of the proposed project.
- Any reduction in economic productivity would be short-term.
- Consumption of negligible amounts of non-renewable resources.
- Potential impacts on minority or low-income populations would be unlikely.
- Impacts would not require mitigation.

No Impacts would occur when there is no perceptible change in socioeconomic conditions or disproportionate impacts on low-income or minority populations.

Impact Definitions—Cultural Resources (see Section 3.12.2)

There would be a **High Impact** when:

- Activities related to the construction, operation, or maintenance of the proposed project adversely affect a historic resource eligible for listing in the NRHP by directly or indirectly altering any of the characteristics of the resource in a manner that would diminish the integrity of the property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association and adverse effects cannot be mitigated.

There would be **Moderate to Low impacts** when:

- NRHP-eligible historic resources are adversely affected, but impacts would be reduced through avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating for adverse impacts through the Section 106 process of the NHPA.

There would be **No Adverse Impact** when known historic resources would not be affected directly or indirectly by construction, operation, or maintenance of the proposed project or; if

present, the project is modified to ensure there would be no adverse effects to cultural resources, and the SHPO and any participating THPO agree there would be no adverse effect.

Impact Definitions—Health and Safety (see Section 3.13.2 and Appendix C)

- A **High Impact** would occur if the new line poses a significant new health or safety risk, or precludes the use of the ROW or nearby areas for pre-existing activities.
- A **Moderate Impact** would occur if the new line poses a new health or safety risk, or alters pre-existing activities on or near the ROW.
- A **Low Impact** would occur if the new line poses a new health or safety risk, but it would not produce a change in activities on or near the ROW.

Impact Definitions—Noise (see Section 3.14.2)

- A **High Impact** would occur if noise levels from construction or operation of the new line exceed existing state standards.
- A **Moderate Impact** would occur if residents are present and nuisance noise levels from construction or operation of the new line exceed ambient noise levels during a portion of the time.
- A **Low Impact** would occur if any contribution of the new line on ambient noise levels would not be easily perceived by nearby residents.